

CHAPTER V – NEW MEMBERS

A. BECOMING A MEMBER.

1. When the new member's application is accepted by the Director of Auxiliary (DIRAUX), the Flotilla Commander (FC) will be notified and provided with the new member's Certificate of Membership and Auxiliary Member Identification Card. Normally, DIRAUX will send the new member a Welcome Aboard letter.
2. At the next regular flotilla meeting or other suitable occasion when the new member is present, the FC or one of the senior Auxiliarists present should administer the New Member Pledge and present the Membership Certificate and ID Card. This should be accomplished with appropriate ceremony and dignity. If possible, the membership certificate should be presented in a frame suitable for hanging or a certificate holder.
3. A copy of the New Member Pledge is included in Enclosure (2).

B. NEW MEMBER PACKET.

1. Flotillas should provide all new members and transfers with a packet of information. This will assist members in becoming productive and feeling appreciated.
2. Packets should include a flotilla roster with telephone numbers, a list of current staff officers, a copy of the flotilla standing rules and a schedule of planned meetings and social events. The latest flotilla, division, and district publication would also be of great value and interest to the new member. A schedule of flotilla and division member training courses should be included. New members should also receive the New Member Handbook with their certificate and membership card.
3. In addition, New Member Packets can greatly assist new members. It will foster a sense of belonging to the unit and stimulate their interest in becoming quickly involved in the unit's activities.

C. THE MENTOR SYSTEM.

1. Flotillas that use a MENTOR SYSTEM have found that new members are very enthusiastic about it. Assigning of a mentor helps to reduce the disenrollment problem. In addition, the flotilla not only gains new members, but gains active members.

2. An experienced flotilla member acts as a mentor who can provide valuable assistance by answering or getting the answer to ALL Auxiliary questions. The mentor can help with jargon, abbreviations, uniforms, filling out AUXMIS reports, activities, procedures and protocol. That person is responsible for introducing the new member to all other flotilla members and ensuring that the new member is encouraged to participate in advanced training and flotilla activities.
3. Careful selection of a mentor should be made. This person's interests and personality should be compatible with those of the new member. A positive attitude and an ability to help people are essential traits.
4. For maximum benefits, a mentor should be appointed and announced when applicants commence their New Member Entry Training.
5. This process helps to ensure the new member is immediately made to feel a part of the flotilla. It prevents a let-down or left-out feeling. The mentor can determine if the Auxiliary is meeting the expectations of the new member, and if not, he or she can assist in alleviating the problem or misunderstanding.

D. THE ROLE OF MEMBER TRAINING.

1. The ability to integrate a new member into the flotilla is often difficult. It requires strong, dedicated leadership combined with much planning and constant follow-up to ensure new members will be welcomed and integrated into the flotilla.
2. The FSO-MT, FSO-PS and the mentor will be the closest contacts for the new member. The FSO-MT plays a key role in the development and retention of the new member through advanced and specialty training. The FSO-MT should assure the new member is given proper guidance, materials, assistance, and encouragement for continuing training.
3. Early review of the Member Involvement Plan will help the member determine the direction and degree of involvement desired. Arrangements for required training will need to be made by the FSO-MT.
4. As the new member becomes part of the flotilla membership, the FSO-PS and FSO-MT should continue personal contact. As the member's newness wears off, frustrations may develop and interest may wane if no one shows an interest in this person. The FSO-PS and FSO-MT should work as a team to act as a relief valve to listen and appropriately act on the new member's frustrations and concerns. A frequent follow-up also is also essential to determine if that member's personal goals and objectives are being reasonably met.

E. NEW MEMBER SEMINAR.

1. One division, several divisions or the district should conduct a seminar or an orientation for all new members that have recently enrolled in their flotillas. This should be conducted on a semiannual or quarterly basis. Auxiliarists who have become new members within the past six months would be targeted and sent personal letters of invitation to attend. Doing this at division level will ensure the availability of a highly qualified instructor(s) and would bring together a reasonably-sized group to interact, ask questions, and exchange ideas as the material is presented.
2. This seminar should provide extensive coverage of information relevant to newly qualified members. Its agenda should include a specific review of MUST and NEED TO KNOW information considered vital for new members.
3. Suggested topics include: acronyms, Auxiliary and Coast Guard organization, chain of command, channels of communication, facility types and requirements, procurement and proper wearing of uniforms, training opportunities and programs, legal matters, supply channels, AUXMIS reports submitted by the member and other topics deemed relevant.
4. Better understanding of the Auxiliary and its programs will enhance the involvement and participation of the new member and will result in improved chances of retaining the new member.

F. NEW MEMBER SURVEY.

1. One means available to the SO-PS or DSO-PS in determining how well the new members in their unit are doing in becoming active and productive members is the use of a new member survey. It also can identify areas for improvement, involvement of leadership and interaction with the member, BEFORE a problem results in disenrollment or inactivity.
2. The new member survey is done by sending all new members a questionnaire. See Enclosure (3).
3. The FSO-PS should distribute the survey to new members after 6 months of service. The new member sends the completed survey to the DSO-PS for processing and feedback to the FSO-PS. The FSO-PS should share this feedback with the FC and VFC in order to improve the flotilla's programs.

G. THE SOLUTION TO RETENTION IS THE INVOLVEMENT OF NEW MEMBERS.

1. The solution to the annual problem of nonpayment of dues and the subsequent disenrollment action lies with member involvement. It starts with the flotilla's efforts and successes in getting the new members involved as soon as practical. New members who are involved and feel personal satisfaction in the Auxiliary and its activities usually remain active and productive. The solution also requires that, as these new members become veteran members, they be kept involved in activities that are rewarding to them.
2. There are a number of basic steps that will enhance new member involvement and participation:
 - a. The leadership of the elected officers is the key to the success of a flotilla. A strong and dedicated commander must make membership retention a top priority during his or her tour of duty.
 - b. Flotillas should arrange for some type of Welcome Aboard ceremony. A periodic social event just to welcome new members AND their families can enhance the integration of the new member into the flotilla. All the elected and staff officers should attend with their families to meet and get to know the new members. During the event, the leaders can explain the benefits of membership, encourage enrollment in member training courses, participation in social events, etc.
 - c. The FC should ask each new member to be involved in training and support some function in the flotilla as soon as possible. If the new member is asked to work with or for another member, the FC and FSO-PS should make sure the veteran Auxiliarist contacts the new member personally and gets them involved at once.
 - d. Since many new members are boat owners, the FSO-MT should encourage them to enroll in the Boat Crew Training Program. This is a great way to get members involved, let them meet the other flotilla members, and get their questions answered. Most members will want to utilize their boats for operational activities; the sooner they can, the better.
 - e. Most new members are eager to learn. In many cases this was their prime motivation for joining. The FSO-MT or course chairperson should encourage them to sign up for courses that will improve their personal skills.

- f. Social programs tailored to the needs and wishes of the membership will result in increased attendance and involvement. Programs directed toward the member's entire family will enhance participation. These programs and events should be promoted and publicized to the entire membership in a timely manner, with special invitations to new members and members who haven't been attending flotilla meetings and functions.
- g. The flotilla must not let too much time pass before a member, especially a new one, is contacted about not attending flotilla meetings and activities. This is a year-round concern to the FC and FSO-PS. The FSO-PS should check attendance and make special efforts to contact the missing members. The FSO-PS should try to entice them to attend, to include arranging for transportation, if necessary. The flotilla should put the Mentor System to work with the new members and, most importantly, follow up...follow up...all year long!
- h. The FC must strive to keep flotilla meetings and programs interesting. This is an important, often neglected area that causes many flotillas to lose their members. People get turned off by boring, endless meetings full of politics, acronyms, meaningless reports that are read word-for-word, and wrangling. New members are especially vulnerable to this turn-off.
- i. The elected leaders and the FSO-PS must be aware of what's going on. They must seek direct feedback from the members and be receptive to suggestions for improvement.
- j. The FC should make certain that members are properly recognized for their achievements. The recognition should be planned and conducted with dignity and meaning. The recognition of a member's contribution to the flotilla and the Auxiliary may be all that is needed to spur them on to greater participation. The recognition of new members for their achievements is very important; new members need reinforcement about the importance and value of their efforts. This includes completing advanced training, helping to support flotilla activities, etc.
- k. Whenever feasible, the families of members should be invited to attend unit functions and programs. If the flotilla is successful in getting the family to participate, they are laying the groundwork for a strong, dedicated and involved member. Understanding and family support are key factors in member involvement and retention.
- l. The FC and FSO-PS should use the entire membership to establish a network of friendly relationships with new members to ensure involvement. This can be effectively facilitated by using the Mentor System.



INVOLVEMENT IS THE KEY TO RETENTION

